In the Specification:

Please amend two paragraphs on page 4, lines 10 to 19 to read as follows:

In an expedient variant, provision is made for the monitoring unit to be set up to keep the auxiliary semiconductor switch at least ~~essentially~~ substantially disconnected during normal operation, but to switch it on in the event of an overload as the main semiconductor switch is simultaneously disconnected. In this way it is possible to affect the characteristic of the transition from the main switch to the auxiliary switch by appropriate design of the monitoring unit.

It is especially advantageous if a ballast resistor is connected in series with the auxiliary semiconductor switch. In this way, the majority of the heat is dissipated in the ballast resistor and the auxiliary semiconductor switch can be dimensioned for a lower power dissipation and therefore be cheaper. In the process it is advisable if the given short circuit current of the branch is determined essentially by the ballast resistor and the feed voltage so that [[R1A]] RA1 $\approx U_s/I_{K1}$.

Please amend the paragraph on page 5, lines 11 to 17 to read as follows:

According to Figure 2, which concerns only one branch of a circuit according to Figure 1, load LAS is connected across a semiconductor switch SW1, in this case a self-locking n-channel IGFET, to feed voltage U_s. As already explained with respect to Figure 1, a monitoring unit UWE, by corresponding signal to the gate of switch SW1, provides for the opening of the latter if, for example, the current measured using resistor R_{M1}

exceeds a ~~pre-definable~~ pre-defined maximum value. Variants of the disconnection conditions are possible, for example, a disconnection as a function of the output voltage or input voltage and combinations of such disconnection conditions.

Please amend the paragraphs on page 6, lines 1 to 3 and lines 11 to 19 to read as follows:

As mentioned, a disconnection of the individual branches may be carried out according to a ~~pre-definable~~ pre-defined sequence, for example, in reaction to a drop in feed voltage U_s, for example, 24 V.

During normal operation, switch SW1 is conductive and the total current flows essentially through switch SW1 and through measuring shunt R_{M1} into load LAS'. In the event of a short circuit, a state similar to a short circuit or very generally when exceeding the ~~pre-definable~~ pre-defined maximum current, the appropriately high current would flow until disconnection, for which a time period of, for example, 50 – 100 ms may be provided. In order to prevent destruction of switch SW1, which has already been heated up during normal operation, transistor SW1 is locked in the event of an overload and the current then flows through auxiliary switch H1A and ballast resistor RA1 until auxiliary switch H1A also receives a disconnect (lock) signal from monitoring unit UWE.

Please amend the paragraph on page 7 at line21 to page 8, line3 to read as follows:

Secondly, such an auxiliary switch H1B could be used without ballast resistance in place of the series circuit ~~R1A—H1A~~ RA1-H1A, so that auxiliary switch H1B may absorb the current/heat surge when main switch SW1 is switched off. For this purpose, main switch SW1 and auxiliary switch H1B are to be triggered by monitoring circuit UWE in such a manner that, in the event of an overload, immediately auxiliary switch H1B is switched on and main switch SW1 is switched off.